

Building Background Knowledge:

Until the middle of the 1800's, newspapers were mainly text. There were no pictures because very few people owned cameras; they were expensive and hard to use. So, in the late 1850's, a newspaper called *Harper's Weekly* tried a new and exciting idea. They discovered a way to print pictures onto the newspapers; this happened just in time for the Civil War. This was the war between the Northern part of the United States and the Southern part. The conflict was over whether or not to free the African-American slaves. The Civil War became the first war that the public could actually view from the safety of their own homes. The newspaper pictures showed the battlefields, maps, and images of the war leaders and soldiers. It was almost as if the public were there themselves watching the battles unfold.

Now that detailed pictures were needed for the newspaper, not only reporters were sent to the battlefields to report on the news, but artists as well. These artists would sketch scenes of the battles they witnessed. These sketches would then be sent back by dispatchers to Harpers for publication. Before the pictures could be printed, the images had to first be carved onto a block of wood to create a stamp. To make this process go quicker, each picture would be divided up into 2 inch squares, and then many carvers would carve their section onto a block of wood. Once all the carvings were done, the blocks were screwed back together (like a puzzle) and finally stamped onto the newspaper.

Artist correspondents became highly sought after reporters. Their pictures helped tell the story of the nation as it grew and unfolded. During the days of the Santa Fe Trail, as settlers traveled across the Great Plains and soldiers protected their journey, artist correspondents illustrated the daily hardships and challenges.